

**Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Finfish Management Advisory Committee (FMAC) Minutes**

2600 Washington Avenue, Newport News, VA

VMRC Commission Room, 4TH Floor

Monday February 27, 2017 – 6:00 P.M.

ATTENDANCE

Members Present

Jeff Deem (Chairman)
John Bello
Tom Powers
Wes Blow proxy for Hon. Ken Neill
Robert Weagley
Peter Nixon proxy for Scott
MacDonald

VMRC Staff Present

Joe Cimino
Alex Aspinwall
Rob O'Reilly
Lewis Gillingham
Megan Wood
Ryan Jiorle
Katie-May Laumann
Jill Ramsey
Nancy McElligott

Members Absent

Andy Hall
Walter Rogers
Meade Amory
Ernest Bowden
Jack Austin
Scott MacDonald
Skip Feller

Others Present

Jonathan French Phillip Burress
Chris Martin Jason Breand
Chris O'Brian Stephen McLeod
Alex Field Norman Greenleaf
Andrew Komjians John Kurowek
Patrick Link K. Smith
Greg Stoles Robert Smith
George Martin Robert Weagley Jr.
Chanel Sparrow John Ford
Will Sparrow Chase Gibson
Chris DeMasi Charles Meredith
Mike Avery Kyle Lewis
David Agee Ken Neil
Brian Watkins Austin Hayne
Chad Brady Bill Gorham
Travis Kemp John Green
Jarrett Quail Jorj Head

I. FMAC Introductions; Announcements

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm

II. Approval of FMAC minutes from September 19, 2016 meeting

The minutes from the September 19, 2016 meeting were not approved because a quorum was not met. Six Committee members were in attendance.

III. New Business: Discussion: Haul seine regulations, as they pertain to user conflicts on tributaries north of the 301 (Harry Nice) Bridge on the Potomac River.

The Committee heard from Mr. George Martin, a charter boat captain who fishes on the Potomac River. Mr. Martin explained that in some of the Virginia tributaries of the Potomac there are haul seine operations that are working in shallow water areas. He expressed concern that the operations are damaging SAV and potentially hurting largemouth bass spawning areas. Mr. Martin stated that his hope would be FMAC would endorse regulatory changes to the Commission to make such fishing practices illegal. Fisheries staff will look into the issue and work with Law enforcement staff; a summary of those findings will be presented to the committee at a later time.

ASMFC Update: Staff updates from the Winter 2017 meeting

• Striped bass

Rob O'Reilly gave a brief overview of what was discussed at the winter ASFMC striped bass management board meeting. At the meeting, with Virginia's support Maryland asked for some flexibility to relax regulations. The development of draft Addendum V to the Fisheries Management Plan will begin and in August the striped bass management board will vote. For Virginia, this can mean a lower minimum size for the recreational fishery and a 10% increase for the commercial fishery.

• Summer flounder

Katie May Laumann presented on the changes that are taking place for 2017 in the summer flounder recreational fishery. She informed the Committee that on February 2, 2017 the ASMFC Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Board selected management alternative Option 5, which requires the DELMARVA region to increase the recreational summer flounder size limit to 17 inches. In 2017 Virginia will have a 17" minimum size and a 4 fish bag limit for recreational flounder.

- Black sea bass

Katie May Laumann presented on the possible changes that are taking place for the 2017 recreational season. There was an overage in the RHL for black sea bass in 2016. New estimates that were released by the NMFS on February 17, 2017 show an overage for the Atlantic coast that may require Virginia change their regulations to adjust the 2017 season. Staff will be requesting the Commission hold an April public hearing once ASMFC and NMFS announce any needed adjustments.

- Tautog

Joe Cimino presented to the Committee an update on tautog. ASMFC is considering an amendment to the FMP for tautog to require all fish harvested commercially to be individually tagged for sale and staff presented this information the FMAC.

- Cobia

Ryan Jiorle presented on the management structure of cobia, the estimated overage in recreational harvest in 2016, and potential management options for the 2017 recreational season. Twelve members of the public provided comment to FMAC: eight were charter captains and four were private recreational anglers. One charter captain and one private angler also provided public comment as lure/tackle shop employees. The majority of captains were against the prohibition on gaffing, while one said he preferred using a net and some said they could manage either way. These captains also cited losses in revenue and a growing hesitancy from potential customers to book trips because of uncertainty in regulations. A few members of the public were willing to accept the same measures as 2016, but many others wanted a higher vessel limit of four fish and no closure for the season. The overwhelming sentiment was a mistrust of recreational harvest estimates from NOAA's MRIP surveys and the belief that Virginia should not have to abide by these numbers, as the abundance of cobia seems healthy. This item is up for public hearing at the March 2017 Commission meeting.

Atlantic sturgeon- changes to the application for an Incidental Take Permit

This itemed was postponed to the next Committee meeting.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:18 pm.